

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 AGRE-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 SP-02 STR-05
TRSE-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 SS-15 NSC-05 /083 W
-----061037 121607Z /44

R 121519Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1764
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USMISSION GENEVA

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PASS AGRICULTURE ELECTRONICALLY

ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, BE
SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY HATHAWAY'S MEETING WITH
BELGIAN AGRICULTURE MINISTER

1. SUMMARY. DURING SEPTEMBER 8 MEETING BETWEEN ASSISTANT
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE HATHAWAY AND BELGIAN MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE HUMBLET, A NUMBER OF SUBJECTS WERE DISCUSSED
INCLUDING US-EC RELATIONS; EC ENLARGEMENT; SURPLUS BELGIAN
MILK PRODUCTION; SECTION 22 CHEESE QUOTAS; AND ARDENNE
HAM EXPORTS TO U.S. END SUMMARY.

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2. ON SEPTEMBER 8, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
HATHAWAY MET WITH BELGIAN MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HUMBLET.
ALSO PRESENT WERE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF CABINET VAN DE WALLE
AND AGATT PADOVANO. HIGHLIGHTS OF MAJOR SUBJECTS
DISCUSSED FOLLOW:

A. U.S.-EC RELATIONS - HUMBLET SAID EC WAS CONSTANTLY AWARE OF TREMENDOUS PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY OF U.S. AGRICULTURE AND ITS POSSIBLE EFFECT ON WORLD PRICES FOR A NUMBER OF COMMODITIES. HATHAWAY REPLIED THE U.S. WAS A LOW COST, EFFICIENT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER AND DEPENDED HEAVILY ON EXPORTS, ESPECIALLY FOR SUCH COMMODITIES AS FEEDGRAINS, WHEAT AND SOYBEANS. ALTHOUGH THE U.S. WAS THE LARGEST EXPORTER OF THESE COMMODITIES, HATHAWAY SAID THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAD NO INTENTION OF USING EXPORT SUBSIDIES TO COMPETE IN FOREIGN MARKETS. HE SAID THE U.S. WAS INTERESTED IN DISCUSSING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS FOR A FEW KEY COMMODITIES IN ORDER TO REDUCE WIDE PRICE FLUCTUATIONS AND TO ASSURE ADEQUATE SUPPLIES. HATHAWAY ALSO POINTED OUT THE U.S. WAS A LARGE IMPORTER OF MEAT AND TROPICAL PRODUCTS. IN ADDITION, HATHAWAY ELABORATED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF U.S. AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS VIS-A-VIS THE U.S. TRADE BALANCE, ESPECIALLY THE DEFICIT CAUSED BY RISING ENERGY IMPORTS.

B. EC ENLARGEMENT - HUMBLET STATED HIS BELIEF THAT THE POLITICAL WILL EXISTS WITHIN EC TO ADMIT SPAIN, GREECE AND PORTUGAL; HOWEVER, A LONG TRANSITION PERIOD WILL BE REQUIRED. HUMBLET MADE REFERENCE TO FRENCH AND ITALIAN SENSITIVITIES IN THE WINE AND FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SECTORS.

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C. DAIRY PROBLEM - HUMBLET SAID, IN THE LONG RUN, THE ANSWER TO SURPLUS MILK PRODUCTION IN BELGIUM WAS TO INCREASE PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION, RATHER THAN CUT PRODUCTION. HATHAWAY POINTED OUT THE DIFFICULTY OF CHANGING CONSUMPTION HABITS, AND THAT U.S. PER CAPITA MILK CONSUMPTION WAS DECLINING FOR VARIOUS REASONS.

HUMBLET ALSO MENTIONED BELGIAN FARM ORGANIZATIONS INTENDED TO RENEW THEIR REQUESTS FOR A TAX ON OIL BEARING MATERIALS AS PART OF THE EC DAIRY CAP, BUT THAT THE GOB DID NOT SUPPORT THIS VIEW.

D. BI-LATERAL U.S.-BELGIAN ISSUES - HUMBLET MENTIONED SECTION 22 CHEESE QUOTAS AND SAID BELGIANS WERE CONCERNED ABOUT PRICE BREAK AND BASE PERIOD USED TO ESTABLISH QUOTA WHICH WAS UNFAVORABLE FOR THEM. HUMBLET ADDED BELGIAN GOUDA AND EDAM CHEESE PRODUCTION WERE INCREASING AND BELGIANS WOULD LIKE TO EXPORT MORE OF THESE TYPES OF CHEESES TO THE U.S. HUMBLET SAID BELGIANS WOULD PREFER TO SEE U.S. QUOTAS GLOBALIZED AND ASKED IF THIS COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES. HATHAWAY REPLIED U.S. WAS AWARE OF CHEESE

QUOTA PROBLEM WHICH AFFECTED A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES;
THAT THIS SUBJECT WAS UNDER REVIEW IN WASHINGTON; AND
THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE DISCUSSED IN AN INTERNATIONAL
FORUM, SUCH AS GENEVA.

HUMBLET ALSO MENTIONED BELGIAN INTEREST IN EXPORTING
ARDENNE HAM TO U.S. HATHAWAY REPLIED U.S. REGULATIONS
WERE THE SAME FOR ALL COUNTRIES, AND IF BELGIAN PLANTS
COULD MEET REQUIREMENTS THEY COULD EXPORT TO U.S.
FYI - ONE BELGIAN FIRM EXPORTED ARDENNE HAM TO U.S.
SEVERAL YEARS AGO BEFORE PLANT WAS DE-LISTED DUE TO
DETERIORATION OF PHYSICAL AND SANITARY CONDITIONS. END FYI.

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3. COMMENT. THE SUBJECT MEETING WAS CONDUCTED IN A
CORDIAL AND FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE. IN A SUBSEQUENT
CONVERSATION WITH VAN DE WALLE, AGATT WAS TOLD BELGIANS
APPRECIATED HATHAWAY'S VISIT, EXPECIALLY SINCE BELGIUM
CURRENTLY HAS EC PRESIDENCY. CHAMBERS

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